

Papers Show 1962 U.S. Plan Against Castro

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MOSCOW, Jan. 26 — More than a year after an American-backed invasion of Cuba failed at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, the United States actively pursued another clandestine plan to overthrow Fidel Castro, according to newly declassified American documents made available here today.

But some Americans who took part in the events said President Kennedy never took the plan to overthrow Mr. Castro as seriously as the documents suggest.

The documents include an assessment by Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the plan, which envisioned an American-spawned Cuban revolt in October 1962, "will require decisive military intervention" by the United States.

The documents were made public in Moscow on the eve of a conference that will bring together for the first time top-level Soviet, American and Cuban officials from that period to review memories of the Cuban missile crisis.

Some Soviet officials — including Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviet leader at the time — have maintained that the reason Moscow deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba, thus provoking the Soviet-American crisis in October 1962, was a strong fear that the Americans intended to invade the island.

Plans for 'Operation Mongoose'

The documents, made public as a result of a lawsuit by the National Security Archive, a Washington-based research center, include plans and guidelines for "Operation Mongoose," an anti-Castro campaign first disclosed in a 1975-76 Senate investigation.

But while the Senate investigation described the operation as primarily a campaign of harassment and sabotage, the new documents show that at least in the minds of some senior officials, the purpose was more ambitious.

One document, a Feb. 20, 1962, memorandum by Brig. Gen. Edward Lansdale, the director of operations for Mongoose, said the goal was to "help the people of Cuba overthrow the Communist regime from within Cuba and institute a new government with which the United States can live in peace."

The memorandum said this goal was "within policy limits already approved by the President," and it set October of that year as the time for "open revolt."

"A vital decision, still to be made, is on the open use of U.S. force to aid the Cuban people in winning their liberty," General Lansdale wrote.

The other newly issued document, written by General Taylor three weeks later, was titled, "Guidelines for Operation Mongoose." It said: "In undertaking to cause the overthrow of the target Government, the U.S. will make maximum use of indigenous resources, internal and external, but recognizes that final success will require decisive U.S. military intervention."

Raymond L. Garthoff, who was a State Department official handling Soviet military and political affairs in the Kennedy Administration, said tonight that he considered the documents "remarkable" but doubted that President Kennedy intended to carry the operation to the point of an overthrow.

"There was a good deal more doubt than these documents convey about the chance of Mongoose stimulating a revolt of a kind that would then pose a question of direct military intervention," Mr. Garthoff said.

Top officials of the Kennedy Administration, like Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, the national security adviser, have said the President viewed Mongoose as a contingency plan, and had no serious intent of overthrowing Mr. Castro. But they have also acknowledged that the Soviets, who would have known at least the outlines of Mongoose through their intelligence operations, might have taken the threat more seriously.

President Kennedy's directive creating the program in November 1961 has never been made public. Mongoose was abolished in January 1963.